

# Brexit, Prophecy, and Conspiracy

## A Necessary Rejection of an Endtime Empire

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This study examines why some pretribulation premillennialist Christian leaders in the United Kingdom instructed their followers, both implicitly and explicitly, to vote to leave the European Union in the referendum in June 2016. The formation of the European Union is regarded as central to the fulfilment of prophecy by many premillennialists as it is purported to be the revived Roman Empire found in the books of Daniel and Revelation in the Bible. On the face of it, to vote to leave the European Union would seem to be contrary to such prophetic conjecture given the importance of the United Kingdom's role in the Union, and the perceived destabilising impact this would have on it. This article argues, utilising evidence from interviews with two premillennialist leaders and other contemporary sources, that voting to leave did not necessarily contradict previous teaching. Rather, voting to leave was not only consistent with this teaching but also reflected the rejection of many features of the late modern condition. However, the rejection of the latter has sometimes resulted in a move beyond the premillennialist prophetic framework into the realm of conspiracy beliefs.

**KEYWORDS:** Brexit, late modernity, conspiracy beliefs, European Union, prophecy, premillennialism

When the result of the United Kingdom referendum on membership in the European Union (EU)<sup>1</sup> was announced in the early hours of Friday, 24 June 2016, the outcome left the “leavers”—or “Brexiters,”<sup>2</sup> as they became known—jubilant, while voters who had campaigned to “remain” found themselves distraught and disappointed. The vote—52 to 48 percent in favor of leaving the EU—left political commentators caught unawares and shocked at what seemed like a seismic shift in the international political landscape.

An immediate reaction to the vote could be found in the volatility of financial markets, where 120 billion pounds were wiped off the Financial Times Stock Exchange 100 Index<sup>3</sup> at the start of trading later that same morning. The aftermath saw politicians and business leaders attempting to mitigate the seemingly dire consequences for the United Kingdom as well as the negative impact on the EU itself. Political leaders of the most powerful European state members, France and Germany, voiced their dismay that one of the strongest economies in the EU had signalled its intention to leave. The immediate future was shrouded in uncertainty. Would this signal the beginning of the end of the European Union?

Among the many observers of this event, both in the United Kingdom and abroad, were Protestant Christians with a particular interest in biblical prophecy. Specifically, fundamentalist premillennialists—Christians at the radical end of the evangelical spectrum<sup>4</sup>—took more than a passing interest in the debate over the United Kingdom's membership in the EU, largely because Europe plays a crucial role in premillennialist apocalyptic eschatology. For these Christians, a united Europe is an important prophetic signifier, and the rise and growing strength of a European super-state is a sign of the Endtime. Premillennialists believe that Christ's return will precede a millennial reign and prophecy, a key aspect of premillennialist theology, is keenly interpreted in light of “signs of the times” pointing to Christ's imminent return.

Prior to the referendum, some leading premillennialists, through preaching and digital media platforms, explicitly and implicitly advised their congregations and wider audiences to vote to leave the EU. Given that a strong unity of European nations has been congruent with much premillennialist prophecy teaching in terms of being a sign of “the end” in this apocalyptic eschatological system, would voting for one of the strongest economies to leave the EU be in line with the trajectory of prophecy interpretation?

This article attempts to answer this question by examining some of the premillennialist discourse around the Brexit debate prior to and following the referendum. Drawing on evidence from qualitative data obtained from interviews with two leading premillennialists and from print and online sources, I argue that much of the premillennialist Brexit discourse not only remains within a premillennialist framework but also reflects wider concerns about society in general. It represents what might broadly be termed the cultural discontent of late modernity within the premillennialist worldview. The distrust is due to a loss of faith in political leaders, industry experts, scientific authorities, and institutions—what Neil Levy terms “accepted epistemic authorities”<sup>5</sup>—and includes deep skepticism toward issues such as climate change and globalization. Of course, premillennialists have a history of correlating major political events with biblical prophecy; however,

the subject of the EU has created a perfect storm in terms of bringing into sharp focus the prophetic and the socio-political. The former manifests itself in both geopolitics and the socio-political perception of the “moral decay” of Western society and its threat to Christianity. Indeed, as we shall see, these geopolitical and socio-political realities show signs of the Endtime and, according to some pretribulation premillennialist understanding of prophecy, are intrinsically linked. Moreover, I argue that this rejection of the perceived machinations of late modernity at times moves premillennialist prophecy interpretation beyond normally accepted narrative boundaries into the territory of what Michael Barkun calls conspiracy beliefs.<sup>6</sup>

This is not an argument for the deprivation thesis,<sup>7</sup> a somewhat discredited approach which contends that apocalyptic ideology is purely a product of social context, a creation of marginalized or threatened communities. Rather, it is a recognition that this form of premillennialist apocalyptic ideology does not appear in a cultural vacuum but is partly the product of a particular fundamentalist Christian theology that finds itself in a turbulent and threatening social climate. Thus, it is recognized that the premillennial apocalyptic framework functions as a lens through which to interpret the significance of social conditions in relation to prophetic narratives. The aim of the article is not to critique premillennialist belief regarding prophecy and its potential fulfilment but rather to offer insight into a worldview that is acutely critical of the late modern condition and how that might be interpreted through a particular apocalyptic framework.

### **SETTING THE SCENE: A RENEWED INTEREST IN PROPHECY**

Since the end of World War II, there has been an upsurge in prophecy interest within premillennialist prophetic discourse.<sup>8</sup> There are two principal reasons for this. The first is the invention of the atomic bomb. In 1948, Moody Bible Institute professor Wilbur M. Smith wrote:

From time to time the church has experienced a deepening interest in prophetic subjects.... The world laughed at all these assertions.... The atomic bomb has altered this sneering attitude toward an impending Divine judgement: there is great reversal in the thinking of modern times.<sup>9</sup>

The atom bomb left an indelible mark on technologically advanced nations, particularly in the West. Its use, which brought World War II to a rapid close, marked a fault line in the recent history of humankind and was the catalyst for ongoing fear in the twenty-first century, bringing with it the knowledge that humanity has the capacity to be “the agent of its own annihilation.”<sup>10</sup> Although atomic and nuclear power have been harnessed as an energy source, and potentially other, more insidious creations have superseded the nuclear threat, its cataclysmic potential is still widely acknowledged and feared. Eminent British scientist Martin Rees has noted that nuclear weapons “can be dismantled, but they cannot be uninvented. The threat is ineradicable. ...”<sup>11</sup>

Second, a number of sociological developments that can readily be identified with the term “late modernity”<sup>12</sup>—what Ulrich Beck terms “world risk society”<sup>13</sup>—are, as we shall see, equally significant for producing intense interest in the prophetic.<sup>14</sup> These include globalization, individualization, cosmopolitanism, detraditionalization, and the explosion in digital technology, all of which bring multifarious risk and uncertainty as well as opportunity. They form convincing evidence that “together we are living in a major period of historical transition”<sup>15</sup> involving changes in social structures that directly impact social agents. Many of these traits are manifest in leading premillennialist arguments for Brexit. Methodologically, the period 1945 to the present provides the broad background of influences and developments that have impacted premillennialism in recent years and constitute the underlying reasons for much of the pro-Brexit rhetoric.<sup>16</sup>

First, I will provide some context for how premillennialists understand and interpret bible prophecy and how Europe fits into this prophetic framework. I will also highlight distinctions between American and British forms of premillennialism. This will be followed by a brief outline of some political developments leading to the European Union project since World War II, with premillennialist reactions where appropriate.

### **A NOTE ON PREMILLENNIALISM**

This article focuses on pretribulation premillennialists: those who believe Christ will “rapture” believers prior to the “tribulation,” which could happen at any moment and will be the harbinger of numerous catastrophic events during a seven-year period, after which Christ will return to defeat Satan.

Most take the Bible at face value, adopting what can be described in the vernacular as a “plain” reading of the text, common among fundamentalist groups.<sup>17</sup> This is not the same as a literal interpretation of the text, though it is often conflated with it. A plain reading provides the interpreter with a more malleable text, particularly in relation to prophetic narratives, which as we shall see, are often resourcefully employed. Indeed, a common phrase among premillennialists is that “if the plain sense makes sense, don’t look for any other sense else you end up with nonsense.”

For pretribulation premillennialists, there are signs that such a time is looming. Indeed, the signs are eagerly anticipated and closely compared to and interpreted through what have become standard biblical prophecy texts.<sup>18</sup> Richard Landes refers to the constant scrutiny of events within apocalyptic discourse as “semiotic arousal” that “fires the imagination, loosening tongue, hand, body to write...to communicate the good news with as many as possible.”<sup>19</sup> In this case, it is the compulsion to identify geo- and socio-political events with biblical prophecy; the more catastrophic the event the greater the propensity to correlate it with prophecy. A typical example within British pretribulation premillennialism is Ian MacPherson, a senior member of the Prophetic Witness Movement International (PWMI)<sup>20</sup> in the 1970s and 1980s: “Among the political omens portending the near Return of Christ the Bible names three which merit special mention: 1) *global wars*; 2) *the formation of huge power blocs*; and 3) *the return of the Jews to Israel*.”<sup>21</sup> Hal Lindsey (b. 1929), in his multi-million selling book *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970),<sup>22</sup> displayed a form of semiotic arousal that Paul Boyer noted “relentlessly turned the Bible into a manual of atomic-age combat.”<sup>23</sup> Although these apocalyptic frameworks are not products of the Cold War that served as the political backdrop, it is clear that this context played a large part in their prognostications.

Among the many prophetic signs pointing to the possible imminent return of Christ, and which would figure as the second of MacPherson’s trinity of omens, is the re-emergence of a revived Roman Empire. That is to say, one of the key prophecies that acts as a barometer for signs of the Endtime is the rise of a European super-state that will bring forth the Antichrist, with the primary biblical proof-texts being the books of Daniel and Revelation.<sup>24</sup>

Another important consideration is the distinction between American and British premillennialism, which has a rich history and tradition in both settings. Probably the single biggest influence on both is John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), the British-born minister of the Church of Ireland and founder of the Exclusive Brethren, whose frequent trips to the United States ensured a legacy that has served to sustain premillennialism to this day.<sup>25</sup> The significance and impact of today’s American premillennialism, however, far exceeds the current British context. Indeed, American premillennialists have a significant influence culturally and politically, and they successfully supported the elections of presidents Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush,<sup>26</sup> and Donald Trump.

The same cannot be said of British premillennialists, whose views are held by a small minority of Christians and whose numbers have decreased in line with declining attendance in churches traditionally holding to this position—Brethren, Baptists, and other evangelical traditions. Premillennialist beliefs tend to command more attention than other doctrinal matters only when significant geopolitical events take place, and the EU referendum ensured that premillennialist prophetic conjecture would be routinely discussed and debated and certainly not a peripheral topic for adherents.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the clear differences in terms of cultural impact and influence, representatives of both camps often work closely together. Moreover, in many ways British premillennialists rely on support from their American counterparts, evidenced in prominent American premillennialists’ frequent visits to the United Kingdom and reciprocal arrangements between key leaders on both sides of the Atlantic. For example, David Reagan, a premillennialist prophecy teacher and founder of the multimedia Lamb and Lion Ministries based in McKinney, Texas, is listed as a leading contributor to the *Prophetic Witness*, PWMI’s monthly magazine and the most prominent premillennialist publication in the United Kingdom. For this reason, I include some American commentaries on Brexit, as their views influence premillennialists in the United Kingdom.

## MOVING TOWARD A UNITED EUROPE

Since 1945, there have been ongoing efforts to establish European unity. The forming of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 was one of the first supranational political unions in Europe established after World War II. In 1957, the Treaty of Rome (establishing the European Economic Community) was signed by Belgium, France, West Germany, Luxembourg, Italy, and The Netherlands, coming into effect on 1 January 1958.<sup>28</sup>

As laid out by French foreign minister Robert Schuman, the Treaty of Rome aimed to bring cooperation, stability, and peace to Europe, but it was the explicit intention to facilitate a united Europe<sup>29</sup> that aroused the suspicion of pretribulation premillennialists. It is worth noting at this point that some premillennialists were still flush with the experience of witnessing the 1948 creation of the State of Israel. Such a fulfilment of prophecy gave many pretribulation premillennialists immense confidence in their ability to understand and interpret prophecy and intensified their scrutiny of geopolitical events for correlations with their biblical prophetic narrative framework. Indeed, the founding of Israel is lauded by many as the most significant fulfilment of biblical prophecy to date.<sup>30</sup> That said, not all premillennialists would agree, and the question of Israel being a fulfilment of prophecy is frequently debated.

As pan-European unity in various phases emerged, premillennialists became increasingly fixated upon it. At a 1961 Los Angeles prophecy conference, J. Vernon McGee (1904-1988) rhetorically asked, “Does the Word of God say anything about Europe?” He answered in the affirmative: “Europe is the very key to world

history as it is unfolding at this present hour.”<sup>31</sup> In 1973, the year Britain joined the European Economic Community (EEC), prominent British prophecy expert and PWMI president Frederick Tatford (1901-1986) wrote in his aptly titled book *Five Minutes to Midnight*:

The anticipated development of central control in the European Community is remarkably similar to what was predicted in the Apocalypse 19 centuries ago.... The similarity is, in fact, so marked that we may well be seeing today the initial stages in the formation of the great Western power which is to appear after the translation of the church from this scene.<sup>32</sup>

The translation he referred to is the rapture of the faithful, and the great Western power is the revived Roman Empire.

In 1981, Greece became the tenth member of the Common Market. Among prophecy teachers and preachers there was a mixture of excitement and anticipation. American televangelist Jack Van Impe (b. 1931) wrote in his book *11:59 and Counting*: “Wow! How many toes? How many horns?”<sup>33</sup>—implicitly correlating this with prophecies in Daniel and Revelation: semiotic arousal at its most explicit.

In 1986, the ten nations became twelve with the addition of Spain and Portugal, prompting those who had pointed to the ten-nation union as the fulfilment of prophecy to re-evaluate their interpretations. It became necessary to “go back to the Word” to seek further understanding. One alternative narrative that gained leverage was the idea of ten super-nation states incorporating the whole of the world, a notion based upon a plan supposedly developed in 1972 by global elites who divided the world into ten conglomerate super-states, initially for economic purposes but culminating in a political New World Order.<sup>34</sup> Suffice to say that over the last 30 years the ten-member figure has become secondary to the evolution and consolidation of the European Union itself.

The above is an example of what Robert Glenn Howard refers to as the narrative plasticity of applied biblical prophecy. Howard bases his analysis on an examination of online Christian fundamentalist apocalyptic discourse, which in his view is flexible enough to allow for “an infinite variety of minor revisions”<sup>35</sup> as long as it remains within the broad parameters of prophecy narratives. As a generalization, this is largely correct and can apply to other forms of prophetic discourse; however, I will argue that some elements of pretribulation premillennialist biblical prophecy interpretation have veered toward the conspiratorial and broken out of the normative narrative framework due to cultural discontent in late modernity/world risk society.

I will next address the question of why leading pretribulation premillennialists might have wanted the United Kingdom to leave the EU, since such a move was generally perceived to significantly weaken that Union and by extension be contrary to, or at least delay, the fulfilment of biblical prophecy. Given that the United Kingdom is the world’s fifth-largest economy and a significant international political player, does this not subvert the internal coherence and consistency of prophecy interpretation regarding a revived Roman Empire, and therefore damage the sustainability of such narratives?

### **VOTE BREXIT!**

I highlight three principal reasons, from the perspective of leading premillennialists, why Brexit was necessary and generally consistent with their apocalyptic framework. These reasons are by no means the only ones, but they are the most common and significant within contemporary pretribulation premillennialism.

First, Britain leaving the EU does not presently discredit previous prophetic teaching in terms of the actual number of member states in relation to the ten described in Daniel and Revelation. When the United Kingdom leaves, 27 nations will remain, a number sufficient for the plasticity of biblical prophecy interpretation to be molded according to current geopolitical scenarios. Prophecy interpretation is no longer simply about correlating the prophecies of Daniel concerning ten; rather, interpretation now focuses more on the European super-state which has already been achieved. Given the seeming fragility of the EU, however, there is every likelihood that the number will continue to decrease, which might be seen as heading in the right direction in terms of more accurately depicting the prophecy in Daniel.

Alternatively, some pretribulation premillennialists speak of ten administrations rather than nations transcending the nation-state borders of EU members.<sup>36</sup> According to David Reagan, “The development that we should watch out for is the division of the EU into 10 administrative units which will cut across national boundaries, with a president heading up each of the areas.”<sup>37</sup>

Second, many interpret Brexit as an opportunity for the United Kingdom to return to its so-called “Christian heritage.” British evangelist David Hathaway<sup>38</sup> wrote in the wake of the EU referendum:

I believe that the prayers of so many of God’s people in recent days has [sic] set us free from an ungodly yoke [the EU] which has marginalised Christian faith, made it almost impossible to teach our children the truth of the Word of God regarding marriage between one man and one woman and teach the acceptability of sex change to very young

children.... [T]he EU is the fractured fulfillment of the final empire of Daniel's vision (the feet in Daniel 2:33). We must return to our Judeo/Christian heritage and resist the encroachment of secularism and false religion.<sup>39</sup>

In a fashion common among many fundamentalist Christians, Hathaway's underlying narrative draws a binary distinction between, on the one hand, the dark forces of Satan in the form of a permissive, liberal, morally decaying society, and on the other hand the "good," morally upstanding Christian life. Europe is dominated by Roman Catholics, many of whom are suspicious of evangelical Protestants. Hathaway sees leaving the EU as an opportunity to defend the fundamentalist Christian tradition, which is being eroded by bureaucrats in Brussels and the influence of Roman Catholicism, which has long been regarded as "false religion" by many Protestant premillennialists and closely associated with Antichrist narratives.<sup>40</sup> Pretribulation premillennialists further understand the Roman Catholic Church to be synonymous with the "Whore of Babylon" portrayed in Revelation 17.<sup>41</sup>

Hathaway identifies another (false) religious threat to Christianity that is closely connected to what became a central, indeed toxic political issue during the referendum campaign: Islam infiltrating Europe and the United Kingdom through immigration. Hostility toward such immigration became one of the key political battlegrounds in the run-up to the referendum; for many Brexiteers, EU membership became synonymous with uncontrolled immigration. For Hathaway, the growth of Islam poses an unprecedented threat to Christianity in Europe. In an interview two weeks prior to the referendum, Hathaway proclaimed:

The migration of today was planned clearly and is a fulfilment of prophecy as to what would happen to Europe. That's one reason why it's dangerous to actually be part of Europe.... Europe is being taken over. There're more people as converts to Islam than to Christianity.... I think it's on a ratio of something like 10 to 1 in Europe.<sup>42</sup>

To be sure, this rhetoric is not confined to this particular worldview. On the contrary, a number of organizations and groups, predominantly right-wing, exist to prevent what is often described as the Islamization of Europe.<sup>43</sup> However, Hathaway believes the combination of Roman Catholicism and Muslim infiltration of Europe marginalizes the Christian Protestant faith, which along with a tide of secularism makes membership in the EU a noxious and destructive force that paves the way for the Antichrist.

Hathaway's view of the EU stretches back years before the referendum. In his 2006 *Babylon in Europe*, he wrote:

We need to realise that the EU is part of the preparation of the False Prophet and the Antichrist. The basis of the EU is a totally secular federal system, where evangelicals are called sects, to be marginalized and neutralised so they can't preach biblical truth or declare that the only way of salvation is through Christ for fear of 'racialism' and offending other faiths.<sup>44</sup>

Hathaway's interpretation of biblical prophecy is also the source of his bellicosity toward what he regards as the stripping away of the traditional role of Christianity in wider society, resulting in a morally bankrupt and secular Union. In a manner similar to many other prophecy teachers, he acts as a guardian of the tradition, a bulwark against the erosion of premillennialist Christian values that the late-modern condition facilitates. As Anthony Giddens notes, "What is distinctive about tradition is that it defines a kind of truth. However much it may change, tradition provides a framework for action that can go largely unquestioned."<sup>45</sup> For Hathaway, these truths are under threat; rescinding EU membership at least provides an opportunity to defend such truths against the cultural discontents of late modernity, the dominance of false religions, and alignment with a union preparing the way for the Antichrist. He makes no claim that leaving the EU will postpone the Endtime, but that the United Kingdom will be released from the shackles of a corrupt Union and free to play an important role in the last days or Endtime.

Church minister Paul Hedger<sup>46</sup> drew widespread interest and criticism from several national newspapers in Britain for preaching on the referendum eleven days prior to the vote.<sup>47</sup> The *Daily Mail* claimed Hedger had urged the congregation to vote to leave, which was God's will. This was partly true. He did say that he believed voting to leave the EU was the will of God, that he would vote accordingly, and that it was his fundamental duty as a Christian leader to inform the congregants of this; but, he did not explicitly urge the congregation to vote to leave the EU. That said, it remains that, in light of Hedger's claim that he was preaching what he believed to be the will of God, he left congregants in no doubt as to how they should vote if they wished to follow God's will.

For Hedger, Christianity has been consistently marginalized through EU bureaucracy, citing the 1953 European Convention of Human Rights treaty as having been designed to obstruct the rights of those with religious beliefs. Despite the seeming protection offered to all religious beliefs, Hedger vehemently claimed in his sermon that "one of the worst traits of the EU" could be found in Article 9 (1),<sup>48</sup> which he paraphrased: "Although the right of freedom to have a religious belief is absolute...the right to manifest that belief is subject to the rights of others."<sup>49</sup>

He bemoaned the fact that Christian belief has had to defer to the rights of others, particularly when those others represent an immoral position. “We are in a unique social experiment, with a humanistic, idol-focused, demonic God plan that seems to have an agenda to discriminate against Christians.” A vote to leave would help stem the threat to Christianity and thwart a larger demonic agenda because the EU was becoming an “empire” that according to the Bible represented rebellion against God. Drawing parallels between the EU and the Roman Empire, he suggested much contemporary EU symbolism bears striking resemblance to that predicted in the Bible, particularly Daniel.

Like Hathaway, Hedger exposed both the discontent with late modernity and the role of prophecy in interpreting signs of the times. The threat to Christianity must be addressed and can only effectively be combatted outside of the EU, which is undermining Christianity. Nation-states must retake control and defend their Christian heritage against the cosmopolitan and detraditionalizing tendencies of the EU putting the rights of others before the Christian faith. Moreover, he said, there is biblical warrant to claim that the EU is a sign of the Endtime. It is the revived Roman Empire. Thus, there is a need for Christians to help re-position the United Kingdom as distinct from the EU, which would have a two-pronged effect: it would help provide a more concrete base from which to re-establish Christian values without EU interference and would remove the United Kingdom from a union from which the Antichrist will emerge.

This helps in overcoming the seemingly paradoxical notion that such political intervention might postpone Christ’s return: a shift from a “catastrophic” to an “avertive” millenarianism.<sup>50</sup> However, that is not the case here. Premillennialism in this context still maintains a catastrophic perspective. Such actions as described above do not avert or change the prophetic outcome but are simply the right actions to take in the socio-political ferment of late modernity, which itself epitomizes signs of the end and fits within the apocalyptic framework.

Third, and most significantly, the United Kingdom’s membership in, and indeed the very fate of, the EU is part of a larger narrative that ultimately supersedes that of the revived Roman Empire: the notion of a world empire, a one-world government and a New World Order. As journalist-turned-prophecy teacher and author Alan Franklin notes, “As a Christian versed in prophecy I cannot help but see in the emerging European super-state the foundations of one-world government with a one-world dictator at its head the...Antichrist.”<sup>51</sup> To vote for Brexit was not just to reject membership of a revived Roman Empire, it was to reject a one-world government, exacerbated by a rejection of the cultural discontents of late modernity.

The notion of a one-world government is not new in premillennialism, with examples dating back to the nineteenth century. I contend, however, that many of the social changes that premillennialist leaders speculate as being part of a one-world government narrative are actually descriptions of processes and conditions of late modernity rather than biblical prophecy. Two have already been alluded to here—a loss of national sovereignty and the emergence of cosmopolitanism, as well as the marginalization of religious belief. Of course, the malleability of biblical prophecy interpretation allows for a great deal of flexibility, and there is evidence to suggest that premillennialists often go beyond the “normative” prophetic framework with multiple sub-narratives as prophetic explanations for geopolitical developments.

Tony Pearce, leader of The Bridge Christian Fellowship in London and regular contributor to PWMI’s *Prophetic Witness* magazine, was very clear when he urged his congregation to vote to leave the EU in a sermon just weeks before the referendum: “If you are a Christian then there is a potential Antichrist nature of the European Union and I think we have to recognise that. That is why I would recommend that you do vote to leave the European Union.”<sup>52</sup>

He went on to connect the European Union with “a grander strategy towards a world government,” suggesting that “behind the scenes there is a global system working to keep us in the European Union.” Pearce cited global elites’ visits to the United Kingdom as evidence of a concerted effort to preserve EU membership, including then-President of the United States Barack Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund Christine LaGarde, and Director General of the World Trade Organization Pascal Lamy. Just after the referendum, Pearce wrote:

Two days before the referendum vote we had a prayer meeting in our fellowship. The Lord led me to read out Micah 2 and apply this to a call to leave the EU: “Arise and depart for this is not your rest; because it is defiled, it shall destroy, yes with utter destruction” (Micah 2:10).... The EU and global governance agenda is fundamentally antichristian and has played its part in removing our Christian heritage and the moral boundaries set by the Lord.<sup>53</sup>

This sums up the distrust toward what are deemed cabal-like interests of political institutions and systems. Moreover, we see again that the resultant social fallout—a loosening of moral boundaries among them—is due to the marginalization of Protestant Christianity.

Further evidence for this is supported by my fieldwork undertaken with prominent pretribulation premillennialist leaders in the United Kingdom: a leader of one of the largest premillennialist organizations in the world, and a minister of a large independent Baptist church.<sup>54</sup> Both were very candid in expressing their

deeply skeptical views on the EU and its connection to a one-world government. They also tended to develop prophetic conjecture that I would describe as conspiratorial.

John Dexter, a premillennialist organization leader and much-in-demand preacher, commented on his views of contemporary society and geopolitical developments in relation to biblical prophecy:

I believe we are at an advanced stage of development of that one-world government. One thing you hear so much about is globalism from our politicians. I think that it was significant that when the Scottish referendum took place you had all the globalists coming out in support of the union as opposed to nationalism. Now we have another referendum coming up on our position in the EU and again, all the globalists are backing the “remain” position, and I think that this just goes to show that there is a strong tide of globalism in the world today, [and] that individual national identities are being pushed aside in favor of a one-world view. And I think that we can see that coming. I think that’s an important part of prophecy.<sup>55</sup>

Globalism is a common theme among premillennialists and synonymous with the notion of a one-world government: it is a move to a one-world system. From this perspective, globalists promote the centralization of political power to the detriment of traditional democratic governmental power found in most (Western) nation-states. They are the elites who are against national autonomy because it hinders the monopolization of political power by relatively few and their ambition of building a New World Order. The gradual centralization of power is the means by which a one-world government is to be achieved. Dexter cited Rev. 13:7 as evidence: “[The Antichrist was] allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. It was given authority over every tribe and people and language and nation....” Dexter, however, was careful to say he was not sure exactly how “it will pan out.” The EU is part of a wider one-world government agenda, and globalists are the political and industry figures exhorting citizens of the United Kingdom to remain in the EU. For Dexter, the EU and globalist leaders represent “forces at work today, in the background, in the darkness, who are working towards a one-world government, preparing the stage for the Antichrist to move in and take control of this world. And I believe we are at an advanced stage of development of that one-world government.”

He went on to explain his views on the contemporary social climate:

Culture has changed very much in the last 50 years...even in the last 20-25 years. We’ve seen great cultural changes taking place in the world and I think there has been a breakdown of the things that made for stable society. ... Again, I think that prepares us for the rule of Antichrist... I believe during his rule sin will be rampant in the world, and in order for that [to happen], the Christian solid foundations that were there before need to be removed. They are almost all removed now, so we are at a stage where the world could receive the Antichrist very easily, and he could act without any problem with his agenda.<sup>56</sup>

Dexter also mentioned economic catastrophe and climate change which, although he admitted the latter was not a hoax, could serve as a form of disaster capitalism.<sup>57</sup> It brings together governments and corporations whose primary objective is to profit from the population through taxation in preparation for a one-world government. The climate change debate will allow globalists “to pursue their cause, and to galvanize support for their one-world view.” Moreover, the advent of the Internet and its role in bringing people under control, and the palpable sense of fear many in society feel due to “the breakdown of society, the breakdown of family life, the fear of climate change, the fear of famine and need, the fear of disease”—all are sub-plots in the one-world government narrative.

Many subversive elements comprise Dexter’s view of society and inform his understanding of the world, how it relates to biblical prophecy and, of course, why one must vote for Brexit. It is the coalescence of context and text: a culture of fear<sup>58</sup> and an apocalyptic biblical hermeneutic.

Paul Thomas, minister of a large independent Baptist church, spoke in a similar vein: the emergence of the EU was, after the founding of Israel, the second most significant fulfilment of prophecy in the twentieth century, a sign of the Endtime. “Politically, things obviously are moving toward a more global understanding of things in the world. The world is a much smaller place than it used to be. And I think that certainly fits in with the idea of an end-time, one-world government.”<sup>59</sup>

Generally, however, Thomas was more circumspect in terms of the way he described the notion of a one-world government. For him, the EU was important because it fits into his “understanding from scripture concerning the rise of Babylon and the potential that the European Union was the fulfilment of that prophecy. How that materializes ultimately who can say, but there’s certainly a push on globalism.” Thomas would not be drawn into speculating that there is a political cabal pulling the strings of governments and corporations for their own interests, but his explicit references to globalists/ism clearly hinted that this is a real possibility.

What is more certain for Thomas is that the EU is central to determining the signs of the times. He recalled that in a sermon written specifically to address his congregation prior to the referendum, he purposely steered away from politics, inasmuch as he did not advise the congregation to vote “leave.” He admitted, however, that “when I preached on that message I think you would have had to be a very dull person not to have known what

I was telling you.” Like Hedger, Thomas indicated that his congregation would have been left in no doubt as to the will of God regarding Brexit. Although he did not explicitly tell his congregants how to vote, he made clear that a “leave” vote was God’s will, and the alternative was not an option.

He also elaborated on other Endtime themes, such as the moral bankruptcy of this age and the apostasy of the church. He cited the rise of fear in wider society, the result of terrorism and economic turmoil. Similarly to David Hathaway, he regarded the EU as being the focus of the emergence of Babylon and the Antichrist. When asked about climate change Thomas was adamant it was “false science.” Furthermore, he claimed that climate change proponents “seem to be people who would be globalists.” In short: on one hand, there is little evidence that a cabal exists in the shadowy corridors of global power; on the other, globalists are behind climate change narratives as well as a host of other activities.

## PROPHECY AND CONSPIRACY

Thus far, we have seen why leading pretribulation premillennialists saw it as imperative to leave the EU, clearly demonstrating an ongoing attempt to subvert and counter the conditions of late modernity and exposing the development of conspiratorial elements within their prophetic discourse. That is to say, in an attempt to navigate the contingent and uncertain climate of contemporary society, some pretribulation premillennialists move beyond normative narrative paradigms in an attempt to rationalize the condition of society and how it might relate to and be understood through their apocalyptic framework.

Michael Barkun has described the supposition of conspiracy as “the belief that an organization made up of individuals or groups was or is acting covertly to achieve some malevolent end.”<sup>60</sup> Although this can account for various types of conspiracy, I would argue specifically that some of the developments in the premillennialist revived Roman Empire and one-world government type of prophetic conjecture fall under Barkun’s category of “systemic conspiracy,” which “is believed to have broad goals, usually conceived as securing control over a country...or the entire world.”<sup>61</sup>

A case in point is Thomas’ post-Brexit sermon on prophecy and the EU, highlighted above, in which he cited two requisite conditions for the revival of the Roman Empire. “If you are going to have a modern revived Roman Empire then you need to replicate two keystone aspects of any empire and the first of those is obvious—you need a common currency.” The second essential is a good road infrastructure. Both of these were key to the expansion and consolidation of the old Roman Empire, and they have been actively pursued by EU leaders. The Euro is the firmly established common currency of virtually all members of the EU, which has invested billions in road systems for its member states. According to Thomas, a common currency and improved road systems are evidence that the EU is the revived equivalent of the old Roman Empire,<sup>62</sup> and much of this evidence is found in the material and everyday objects within contemporary culture.<sup>63</sup>

Of course, it is debatable whether there are direct biblical texts that correlate to the idea of road systems or other symbolism associated with the EU and a revived Roman Empire, and to attempt such correlation is to miss the point of prophecy interpretation. Thomas’ and Dexter’s descriptions of dark forces attempting to establish a New World Order, globalists causing economic turmoil, and dubious claims for climate change, to name but a few, are cited by a growing number of pretribulation premillennialists engaging with and developing conspiracy beliefs. That said, they would not see it that way themselves.

This sort of prognostication, I argue, represents what Stef Aupers has identified as a wider trend in the proliferation of conspiracy beliefs, certainly in the West.<sup>64</sup> Fear of globalist manipulation of circumstances toward world domination demonstrates a loss of faith in traditional authority. As with the Brexit vote, Donald Trump’s success in the United States presidential election typifies the distrust of elites, with Hillary Clinton portrayed as the epitome of a globalist who is part of a wider cabal.<sup>65</sup> This erosion of trust and the ensuing epistemological insecurity, however, does not dent the pursuit of what they purport to be “truth” in and of itself. On the contrary, alternative strategies are employed to resist erosion of traditions by late-modern society and defend the fundamentals of their faith—strategies that stretch narrative boundaries beyond normal parameters.

This position exposes the limitations of Howard’s thesis of narrative plasticity, which becomes redundant in the face of conspiratorial sub-narratives. David G. Robertson’s notion of “rolling prophecy”—which “entails making small prophecies on a regular and ongoing basis, although tied to a larger teleological narrative”<sup>66</sup>—is arguably better suited to contemporary pretribulation premillennialist prophecy narratives that succumb to conspiratorial conjecture. Despite moving beyond normally accepted narrative boundaries (and outside those that Howard notes), what I regard as conspiratorial elements of pretribulation premillennialist prophecy do remain tied to the teleological narratives to which Robertson refers.

Michael Barkun is right when he says that the notion of conspiracy is both frightening and reassuring for believers.<sup>67</sup> It reacts against the normal epistemological authorities by developing alternative strategies to mitigate against the currents of late modernity. In doing so, it shores up epistemological insecurity while providing existential security through the construction of narratives that bring ontological assurance.<sup>68</sup> It is a



form of what Neil Levy terms radically socialized knowledge that provides succor in turbulent times through internally constructed epistemological frameworks that protect tradition and facilitate critique of society.<sup>69</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Despite the seeming dissonance between premillennial biblical interpretation of prophecy concerning the revived Roman Empire and the clarion call to leave the EU, it is clear that a complex mixture of biblical text and socio/geopolitical context has produced narratives of discontent within contemporary society. As the EU has increased in size and influence; as control is seemingly wrested from member states to a centralized European parliament; as the process of detraditionalization continues; as evangelical (fundamentalist) Christianity is marginalized; and as the collapse of so-called moral values contributes to the steady decay of society—so the EU is increasingly identified with the coming Antichrist. Many pretribulation premillennialists are convinced it is the revived Roman Empire and precursor to a New World Order.<sup>70</sup>

What the EU represents is anathema to the leading pretribulation premillennialists analyzed here, and the timing of the EU referendum created a perfect storm in which these leaders were able to link their dissatisfaction with contemporary society with their understanding of biblical prophecy. The subsequent rhetoric was partly a product of late modernity, a reaction to living in Ulrich Beck's unstable and uncertain "world risk society."<sup>71</sup> That does not mean that this example of apocalyptic ideology has its origins in late modernity; rather, their understanding of society and geopolitics is shaped by their "plain reading" of the Bible within the prophetic framework peculiar to this form of premillennialism.

It is typical of this fundamentalist strain of religion to find certainty in the flux of everyday life. While the apocalyptic element of premillennialism is never far from the surface, its intensity ebbs and flows with socio/geopolitical currents. Late modernity has provided a high tide for the apocalyptically oriented believer, in which the end-game, long established from biblical narratives, adapts to the context. Alternative narratives are devised especially when the context and text appear at odds, but this brings with it the temptation to breach the norms of the prophetic framework, providing sub-narratives that include more speculative theories that I categorize as conspiracy belief. References to theories regarding a predicted one-world government and an alleged symbolism of the EU in relation to the Roman Empire constitute such conspiracy belief.

From the perspective of the pretribulation premillennialist leaders examined in this study, a Brexit vote was an answer to prayer, demonstrating that the perceived fulfilment of prophecy reaffirms existential security in a contingent and uncertain world. In this context, such fulfilment distances the United Kingdom from the dark forces at work in mainland Europe and beyond. It is a necessary rejection of an empire that signifies the Endtime, and from a sociological perspective it highlights a critical rejection of the society in which we live.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The European Union is a political and economic union of nations (currently 28) within Europe that operates on an intragovernmental form of political decision-making.
- <sup>2</sup> “Brexiters” is a term derived from “Brexit,” a portmanteau of “British exit”—shorthand for the United Kingdom leaving the European Union.
- <sup>3</sup> FTSE 100 is an index of the top 100 “blue chip” companies registered at the London Stock Exchange.
- <sup>4</sup> Premillennialists are by no means alone in this category. Other groups include postmillennialists such as Christian Reconstructionists.
- <sup>5</sup> Neil Levy, “Radically Socialised Knowledge and Conspiracy Theories,” *Episteme* 4, no. 2 (2007): 181-92.
- <sup>6</sup> Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
- <sup>7</sup> For an overview of the development of millennial scholarship, see Douglas H. Shantz, “Millennialism and Apocalypticism in Recent Historical Scholarship,” in *Prisoners of Hope? Aspects of Evangelical Millennialism in Britain and Ireland, 1800-1880*, ed. Crawford Gribben and Timothy C.F. Stunt (Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, England: Paternoster, 2004), 18-43; and Joshua Searle and Kenneth G.C. Newport, eds., *Beyond the End: The Future of Millennial Studies* (Sheffield, IA: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012).
- <sup>8</sup> See Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); and Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1992).
- <sup>9</sup> Wilbur M. Smith, *This Atomic Age and the Word of God* (Boston: W.A. Wilde, 1948), 309.
- <sup>10</sup> Robert Wuthnow, *Be Very Afraid: The Cultural Response to Terror, Pandemics, Environmental Devastation, Nuclear Annihilation, and Other Threats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1.
- <sup>11</sup> Martin Rees, *Our Final Century: Will Civilisation Survive the Twenty-first Century?* (London: Arrow Books, 2003), 2.
- <sup>12</sup> See Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990); *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990); and *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping Our Lives* (London: Profile Books, 2002).
- <sup>13</sup> Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London: Sage, 1992); and *World at Risk* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).
- <sup>14</sup> See Steven Knowles, “Rapture or Risk: signs of the end or symptoms of world risk society,” *Culture and Religion* 15, no. 4 (2014): 419-35; available at <http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/14755610.2014.982670>; accessed 1 November 2017.
- <sup>15</sup> Giddens, *Runaway World*, 1.
- <sup>16</sup> The 1948 forming of the State of Israel has not been included in the two principal reasons cited here because not all premillennialists agree that it is the fulfilment of prophecy. The atomic bomb had a far wider impact in terms of existential crisis and wider interest in prophecy beyond premillennialism.
- <sup>17</sup> Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in a Modern World* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 5; Vincent Crapanzano, *Serving the Word: Literalism in America from the Pulpit to the Bench* (New York: New Press, 2000), 2-3.
- <sup>18</sup> For example, Daniel 2 and 7; Ezekiel 38, 39; Matthew 24; and the Book of Revelation.
- <sup>19</sup> Richard Landes, *Heaven on Earth: Varieties of the Millennial Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 14.
- <sup>20</sup> Prophetic Witness Movement International is a British organization that claims to be the oldest premillennialist prophecy society in the world. Founded by Frederick B. Meyer, it celebrated its centenary in 2017.
- <sup>21</sup> Ian McPherson, *News of the World to Come: Panorama of Biblical Prophecy* (Eastbourne, United Kingdom: Prophetic Witness, 1973), 67. Italics in the original.
- <sup>22</sup> Hal Lindsey with C.C. Carlson, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Marshall Pickering, 1970).
- <sup>23</sup> Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, 127.
- <sup>24</sup> In particular, Daniel 2 and 7 are cited as sources for this connection between the EU and the revived Roman Empire. Daniel interprets the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, which centers upon a statue made of four metals signifying four kingdoms. The feet of iron and clay on the fourth statue, or old Roman Empire, are what Bible prophecy teachers regard as representing the revived, or fifth, Roman Empire from which the Antichrist will emerge in the Endtime. Contemporary pretribulation premillennialists believe this signifies the current, perilous state of the contemporary European Union.
- <sup>25</sup> Darby’s influence includes widespread acceptance, among many premillennialists, of Dispensationalism and the doctrine of the secret Rapture. I attended the 2015 Pre-Trib Research Center Conference in Fort Worth and noted the reverence with which Darby is held.
- <sup>26</sup> See Glenn W. Shuck, “Christian Dispensationalism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 515-28.
- <sup>27</sup> In an interesting case study of one Pentecostal premillennialist church, Damian Thompson argued that prophecy, while important, was a marginal subject. This is certainly not the case with the analysis of leading premillennialists in the present study: prophecy is central to their worldview. See Damian Thompson, *Waiting for Antichrist: Charisma and Apocalypse in a Pentecostal Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- <sup>28</sup> Andreas Staab, *The European Union Explained: Institutions, Actors, Global Impact* (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 2013).

- <sup>29</sup> See “Treaty of Rome,” EUR-Lex; at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3Axy0023>; accessed 1 November 2017.
- <sup>30</sup> See David R. Reagan, *Living on Borrowed Time: The Imminent Return of Jesus* (McKinney, TX: Lamb and Lion Ministries, 2013), 141; Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 43; Dennis Lyle, *Countdown to Apocalypse: Unlocking Bible Prophecy* (Belfast: Ambassador-Emerald, 1999), 71; and John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies: 37 Crucial Prophecies that Affect You Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1991), 7, 71-72.
- <sup>31</sup> J. Vernon McGee, “The Prophetic Word and Europe,” in J. Vernon McGee et al., *The Prophetic Word in Crisis Day: Prophetic Messages Delivered at the West Coast Prophetic Congress in the Los Angeles, Calif. Area in Mid-1961* (solidchristianbooks.com, 2015), 80.
- <sup>32</sup> Frederick A. Tatford, *Five Minutes to Midnight* (London: Victory Press, 1973), 72, 74.
- <sup>33</sup> Jack Van Impe, *11:59 and Counting* (Royal Oak, MI: Jack Van Impe Ministries, 1983), 106. This a direct reference to the ten toes on the feet of the statue in Daniel 2, which at that time equated to the ten nations of the EU.
- <sup>34</sup> See F. Kenton Beshore, *Rapture When? An Examination of Bible Prophecy* (Costa Mesa, CA: World Bible Society, 2013); and Reagan, *Living on Borrowed Time*. Although mentioned by numerous twentieth-century politicians, George H. W. Bush brought the term “New World Order” to wider public attention in his speech to the American Congress on 11 September 1990, during the early days of the first Gulf War (“Operation Desert Shield”).
- <sup>35</sup> Robert Glenn Howard, “Sustainability and Narrative Plasticity in Online Apocalyptic Discourse After September 11, 2001,” *Journal of Media and Religion* 5, no. 1 (2006): 25-47, 26.
- <sup>36</sup> This should not be confused with the ten continental-style administration hypothesis cited earlier. This version is set within the boundaries of Europe.
- <sup>37</sup> Reagan, *Living on Borrowed Time*, 145.
- <sup>38</sup> David Hathaway is President of Eurovision Ministries in Europe and Editorial Director of *Prophetic Vision* magazine. A popular speaker with an itinerant ministry, he has over 4,000 followers on Facebook and travels extensively across the United Kingdom and Europe. See his website at <http://www.eurovision.org.uk>; accessed 1 November 2017.
- <sup>39</sup> David Hathaway, “Why Leaving the EU means we can return to our Christian Heritage;” at <https://www.premierchristianity.com/Blog/Why-leaving-the-EU-means-we-can-return-to-our-Christian-heritage>; accessed 1 November 2017.
- <sup>40</sup> Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, 272-76; and George H. Pember, *Mystery Babylon the Great* (Miami Springs, FL: Schoettle Publishing, 1988).
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- See Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, 274-75; Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 114-34; Joshua T. Searle, *The Scarlet Woman and the Red Hand: Evangelical Apocalyptic Belief in the Northern Ireland Troubles* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2014), 91-128; and Hilton Sutton, *The Beast System: Europe in Prophecy* (Tulsa: Harrison House, 1981), 53.
- <sup>42</sup> David Hathaway interview on Revelation TV, “Could this be the most convincing argument for Brexit to date?,” 10 June 2016; at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vAfaxNFm3k>; accessed 1 November 2017.
- <sup>43</sup> For example, the group “Stop Islamisation of Europe;” at <https://sioeeu.wordpress.com>; accessed 1 November 2017.
- <sup>44</sup> David Hathaway, *Babylon in Europe: What Bible Prophecy Reveals about the European Union* (Chichester, United Kingdom: New Wine Ministries, 2006), 19-20.
- <sup>45</sup> Giddens, *Runaway World*, 41.
- <sup>46</sup> Hedger is the leader of High Street Church, an independent Baptist Church with approximately 300 members in Isleham, Cambridgeshire, United Kingdom.
- <sup>47</sup> See Julian Robinson, “Outrage as a church leader uses Sunday sermon to urge parishioners to Vote Leave claiming a Brexit was ‘God’s view,’” *The Daily Mail*, 18 June 2017; at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3648381/Outrage-church-leader-uses-Sunday-sermon-urge-parishioners-Vote-Leave-claiming-Brexit-God-s-view.html>; and a similar piece by Natalie Robinson, Joanne Webb and Sam Webb, “Church pastor claims GOD supports Brexit during his Sunday sermon,” in *The Mirror*, 20 June 2016; at <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/church-pastor-claims-god-supports-8236232>; both accessed 1 November 2017; and Paul Hedger, “The Referendum,” sermon preached on 6 December 2016; at [http://www.highst.org.uk/Media/Player.aspx?media\\_id=170075&file\\_id=182017](http://www.highst.org.uk/Media/Player.aspx?media_id=170075&file_id=182017); accessed 1 November 2017.
- <sup>48</sup> See *European Convention of Human Rights*; at [http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf); accessed 1 November 2017.
- <sup>49</sup> All quotations are from Paul Hedger, “The Referendum.”
- <sup>50</sup> See Eugene V. Gallagher, “Catastrophic Millennialism” and Daniel Wojcik, “Avertive Apocalypticism,” in Catherine Wessinger, *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*, 27-43 and 66-88 respectively.
- <sup>51</sup> Alan Franklin, *EU: Final World Empire* (Oklahoma City, OK: Hearthstone Publishing, 2002), 29.
- <sup>52</sup> This sermon is available through The Bridge Christian Fellowship website, at <http://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/mp3-summer2016/190616e+2+Timothy+3+to+4.8.mp3>, accessed 1 November 2017.

- <sup>53</sup> Tony Pearce, *Brexit—A Blow for Global Government*, June 2016; at <https://lightforthelastdays.co.uk/articles/globalisation/brexit-a-blow-to-global-government/>; accessed 1 November 2017.
- <sup>54</sup> The names of the two participants cited below have been changed.
- <sup>55</sup> Interview, 20 May 2016, at the prophecy organization's office.
- <sup>56</sup> Interview, 20 May 2016.
- <sup>57</sup> For an introduction to the notion of disaster capitalism, see Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* (London: Penguin, 2008).
- <sup>58</sup> Frank Furedi, *Culture of Fear Revisited* (London: Continuum, 2006).
- <sup>59</sup> Interview, 20 July 2016, at the church office.
- <sup>60</sup> Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 3.
- <sup>61</sup> Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 6.
- <sup>62</sup> According to Thomas, other evidence is found in the symbolism of the EU flag, anthem and its architecture.
- <sup>63</sup> See Joseph Webster, *The Anthropology of Protestantism: Fish and Crisis Among Scottish Fisherman* (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).
- <sup>64</sup> Stef Aupers, "Trust No One: Modernization, Paranoia and Conspiracy Culture," *European Journal of Communication* 27, no. 1 (2012): 24.
- <sup>65</sup> Political commentators referred to the congruity between Donald Trump's victory in the United States and the vote for Brexit in the United Kingdom. See "Donald Trump, Brexit and the transatlantic echo," in *The Economist*, 10 November 2016; at <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21710050-british-and-american-politics-often-march-lockstep-now-they-do-so-again-donald-trump-brexit>, accessed 1 November 2017; and John Harris, "The Reasons for Trump were also the Reasons for Brexit," *The Guardian*, 10 November 2016; at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/10/donald-trump-brexit-us>; accessed 1 November 2017.
- <sup>66</sup> David G. Robertson, *UFOs, Conspiracy Theories and the New Age* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 14.
- <sup>67</sup> Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 4.
- <sup>68</sup> See Aupers, "Trust No One."
- <sup>69</sup> Levy, "Radically Socialised Knowledge and Conspiracy Theories."
- <sup>70</sup> Grant R. Jeffery, *Final Warning: Economic Collapse and the Coming World Government* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1995); and *Shadow Government: How the Secret Global Elite is Using Surveillance Against You* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2009).
- <sup>71</sup> See U. Beck, *World Risk Society*.